

Introduction to evidence

The Arkansas Teacher Excellence and Support System (TESS) is based on an evidence-centered design. Our rubric, the Danielson Framework for Teaching, has content that is research-based. The framework components are those proven to produce effective educator practice. The work of an educator will produce proof of what is or isn't occurring during all phases of instruction. This will be the 'evidence' of teacher evaluation.

TESS includes three sources of evidence. They are teacher inputs, observation documents and student outcomes. Strategies for gathering evidence from these sources include interviews before and after teaching, notes made during the direct observation of teaching, and the collection of instructional artifacts, including student work and assessments.

Evidence of Instructional Practice – Artifacts On-Stage and Off-Stage

Artifacts are documents, records, objects and other items that provide evidence for improving instruction. Artifacts may also be items that result from learning. Sometimes, artifacts offer the best (and maybe only) evidence of certain aspects of teaching. Artifacts are essential for teachers to demonstrate skills in the components of *Domain 1: Planning and Preparing for Instruction* and in *Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities*. Although essential for Domains 1 and 4, artifacts are not limited to supporting those domains.

The activities of an educator before and after teaching in the classroom may be referred to as 'off-stage work'. Teaching in the classroom would then be 'on-stage work'. Both are vital to instructional success. Educators are very familiar with the scenario of an evaluator taking notes while observing a lesson. While this form of "evidence collection" is the primary source of evidence for *Domain 2: Creating an Environment for learning* and *Domain 3: Instruction*, artifacts generated as part of the everyday work can also provide evidence for these domains.

Evidence of Inputs and Outcomes

The TESS rubric, known as The Danielson Framework for Teaching, describes the work of teaching by components and performance levels. As the Framework describes teacher 'inputs'; the results are 'outcomes' which are shown in terms of student learning. For this reason, documentation of student academic growth is relevant to a teacher's practice and will be part of a teacher's professional improvement documentation.

Using Artifacts in TESS

As teachers and evaluators know, the initial events in the TESS academic cycle are a self-assessment completed by the teacher and an analysis of relevant data based on the Framework for Teaching in collaboration with the evaluator to finalize the teacher's Professional Growth Plan. This plan will drive the teacher's activities and learning for the year. Artifacts begin here with an understanding of what will lead to improved practice and evidence high-quality work.

Teachers who are in the Track 1-Probationary/Novice; Track 2A- Summative; or Track 3- Intensive Support will acquire evidence, in the form of documents, records, observed

performance notes, and objects supporting all 22 components of the Framework with an emphasis on the components specified on the teacher's Professional Growth Plan. Teachers who experience both formal and informal classroom observations will find each conducive to certain artifacts. An informal classroom observation is not announced, and will not have evidence from a Pre-Conference Interview, but a lesson/unit plan will be important. Even though a Pre-Conference Interview is not held, the Reflective or Post Conference will be part of the process and may incorporate evidence and artifacts which would normally be part of the Pre-Conference. Much can be learned from student work, instructional materials and other 'on-stage' items present during an informal observation. The structure of a formal classroom observation lends to artifacts planned and provided during the Pre-Conference Interview, as well as the Post Conference Interview. **Artifacts and evidence will be acquired and reviewed throughout the year.** As they are shared with the evaluator, a common ground for professional conversations and continued feedback will be formed.

Teachers who are part of the Track 2B: Interim Appraisal Track will be focused on artifact and evidence support for chosen PGP focus components, and other components, if requested by the evaluator. These artifacts will also be acquired throughout the year as the work is completed and shared with the evaluator during the informal observation feedback meetings, the mid-year PGP review and the end-of-year conference.

The professional work of every teacher in TESS culminates in either an annual Summative Evaluation Conference or an End-of-Year Review (for teachers in Track 2B: Interim Appraisal). At this time, additional or external artifacts may be identified and become part of the teacher's overall evaluation.

This is NOT an Artifact

Artifacts in TESS are not pages in a portfolio which fills a three-ring binder. It is important to remember that more artifacts are not necessarily proof of better practice.

Artifacts in TESS are not objects without meaning. A clear relationship to a teacher's or student's work is required. Artifacts are created outside a classroom or produced during instruction for a definite reason which may be communicated and understood. Artifacts are not general forms or objects without intention.

Artifacts in TESS are not student or teacher busy work. They are content-centered, skill-focused and productive pieces of teaching and learning.

Artifacts at Work

Artifact planning and collection will be a process of 'best fit' to local practice. Either digital or hard-copy format is acceptable as each teacher and every school has systems established for successful communication.

As artifacts can provide an undeniable benefit to the work of instruction, if not planned and used properly, they may detract from the intended purpose. Mass-produced forms or items not appropriately supporting student understanding will not speak well of the instructional work of teachers or students.

Working with artifacts should lead to a teacher's increased ability to facilitate student academic growth. This will happen when the quality of artifacts is considered. A flowchart for processing this work is found at the end of this information.

Artifacts are our Future

As we recognize the importance of artifacts and include them in our practice, a consistent and dependable tool for the improvement of instructional practice and increased student growth may be found.

We must:

1. Plan for artifacts - remembering they are purposeful and already a part of our practice.
2. Be reasonable with requirements - for teachers new to the work and for experienced teachers. Both quality and quantity of artifacts should be considered.
3. Establish inclusion of artifacts in conferences - discussing and analyzing artifacts should be an understood part of the work of teachers and evaluators. This should be the work of learning teams and other collegial efforts.
4. Work to improve our understanding and use of artifacts - a ready focus and tool which already exists must be included in our planned professional development.

Additional details on artifacts and evidence are available to all Arkansas teachers in The Framework for Teaching component modules on Arkansas IDEAS at <http://ideas.aetn.org> . Teacher evaluators will find more on this subject when completing training in Teachscape FOCUS - <http://login.teachscape.com>

*Danielson, C. (2008). *The Handbook for Enhancing Professional Practice: Using the Framework for Teaching in Your School*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

